FAREWELL SPEECH FOR THE CHINESE CONSUL GENERAL, HIS EXCELLENCY MR LI ZHIGONG, 28 MAY

- Programme director
- Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Durban: His Excellency Mr Li Zhigong
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Esteemed guests
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening. Sanibona.

It is both an honour and a moment of reflection that we gather here today to bid farewell to a distinguished diplomat, a trusted partner, and a valued friend of the City of eThekwini, Consul General Li Zhigong.

As you conclude your tenure in Durban, Consul General Li, we bid you farewell with deep appreciation for your meaningful role in strengthening the bonds between the People's Republic of China and our municipality,

a tenure defined not only by diplomacy, but by impactful action, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to partnership.

By promoting people-to-people ties and bridging local and Chinese enterprises, you have created a unique platform which helps us drive sustainable economic growth, deepen cultural understanding, and unlock long-term partnerships with high value.

Your Excellency, we are happy that the relationship between China and eThekwini is one rooted in mutual respect, shared economic ambition, and a common vision for sustainable development. Under your leadership, this relationship has deepened significantly, translating diplomatic goodwill into tangible progress that benefits our communities.

We have witnessed increased trade and investment flows, particularly in infrastructure development, logistics, manufacturing, and energy. The Port of Durban, one of the busiest in Africa, has continued to benefit from engagement with Chinese investors and partners, strengthening our position as a gateway between Africa and global markets.

This shared vision has opened pathways for collaboration in smart infrastructure, transport corridors, and economic integration, positioning eThekwini as a key node in global trade networks and a dynamic hub on the African continent.

Equally significant has been your role in advancing our global outlook through the strengthening of sister-city relations. We value the growing partnerships between Durban and leading Chinese cities such as Guangzhou, Ningde, and Xiamen. These relationships continue to foster collaboration in economic development, innovation, education, and cultural exchange, bringing our people closer together while unlocking shared opportunities.

Consul General Li, your leadership has been defined by openness, dedication, and a clear understanding of the role cities play in driving development. You have been a consistent and passionate advocate for cooperation with eThekwini, and for that, we are truly grateful.

As you prepare to embark on your next chapter, we do not say goodbye, but rather celebrate the legacy you leave behind, a legacy of strengthened partnerships, expanded opportunities, and enduring goodwill.

On behalf of the people of eThekwini Municipality, I extend our sincere gratitude for your service. We wish you continued success in your future endeavours, and we trust that wherever your journey takes you next, you will carry with you the warmth of Durban and the friendships you have built here. Please know that this city will always remain your home.

In closing, let tonight not only mark a farewell, but reaffirm our commitment to building on the strong foundation you have laid. The partnership between China and eThekwini Municipality will continue to grow, guided by shared aspirations, mutual trust, and a vision for inclusive development.

We wish to thank you, Consul General Li Zhigong, for your leadership, your friendship, and your service.

We wish you well.